



WISCONSIN WELLHEAD PROTECTION NEWS

Fall 2003



HAPPY HALLOWEEN!

Hi everyone. I don't want to scare you. With school and other fall activities in full swing and Halloween just around the corner, it's time for another issue of Wisconsin Wellhead Protection News. This issue focuses on the delivery of source water assessments to municipal water supply systems and what happens next. If your community hasn't received its assessment yet, it will over the next several months. These assessments contain valuable information that can be used in developing a wellhead protection plan to protect a community's water supply. Information is provided in this newsletter to help communities decide which actions might be appropriate keep their drinking water safe.

Also included are updates on 2003 as the Wisconsin Year of Water and the WDNR source water and wellhead protection website redesign. I hope this information is helpful. Enjoy!

CONGRATULATIONS!

Congratulations are in order for a number of communities who are or have been involved in wellhead protection (WHP) planning to protect their water supply wells. Albany, Cumberland, DeForest, Dresser, Drummond, Durand, Gresham, Hixton, Luck, Merrilan, Oakfield, Sturgeon Bay and Winter have worked with or are working with Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WDNR) or

Wisconsin Rural Water Association staff on wellhead protection plans, ordinances or both. You are commended for being proactive in protecting your water supply.

Communities which have developed wellhead protection plans for new wells since the last newsletter include Boyceville, Greenville Sanitary District, Kiel, Marshfield, Oostburg, Reedsburg and Stanley. Hats off to these communities as well for recognizing the importance of wellhead protection. Keep up the good work!

The WDNR's wellhead protection website includes a listing of those communities who, according to our records, have adopted a plan for at least one of their wells. The list now includes over 200 communities. Check out the website at www.dnr.state.wi.us/org/water/dwg/gw/WI-WHP-Communities.pdf. If you would like assistance from the WDNR in getting started, contact me by phone, email, regular mail or fax (see below).

You can also contact Ed Morse, Groundwater Technician for the Wisconsin Rural Water Association, at 920-648-7578 or edmorse@charter.net. Ed works with small communities (less than 10,000) on wellhead protection planning.

Another option is to contact an engineering firm or a professional hydrogeologist to help develop a wellhead protection plan. Check your yellow pages for engineering firms or hydrogeologists in your area.

If you have ideas regarding topics or questions that could be addressed in future newsletters, contact me by phone (877-268-9355 toll free), by fax (608-267-7650), by email (david.lindorff@dnr.state.wi.us) or regular mail (Wisconsin DNR, P. O. Box 7921, Madison, WI 53707-7921).

Dave Lindorff, Editor



YEAR OF WATER IN WISCONSIN

The spring newsletter contained an article about the Waters of Wisconsin (WOW) conference held last October which brought together some 700 people representing the broad spectrum of water interests to talk about Wisconsin's water resources. The Waters of Wisconsin Report was released on Earth Day and contains a number of recommendations for improving our management of our water resources for the future. You can download a copy of the report at www.wisconsinacademy.org/wow/download.pdf.

One of the outcomes of that conference is that Governor Doyle proclaimed 2003 as the Year of Water in Wisconsin. A website has been created to keep track of the variety of activities around the state celebrating the Year of Water. You can check out the events being planned by visiting the Wisconsin Year of Water website at www.wisconsinyearofwater.org. Here you can also find an overview of the Year of Water, the Governor's Proclamation, a listing of partners, an event/program registration form, a tool kit and links to other resources.

REDESIGNED WEBSITES

The WDNR is currently redesigning its website to make it easier to find information, communicate more effectively and provide a better webpage appearance. This is true of the wellhead protection and source water assessment and protection programs as well. We have reorganized the WHP website – www.dnr.state.wi.us/org/water/dwg/gw/wellhead.htm – and provided links in columns on both the right and left sides of each page to jump directly to a wide variety of wellhead protection information.

The source water assessment and protection program has not only a new design, but also a new website address – www.dnr.state.wi.us/org/water/dwg/swap/index.htm. There are links to the state's program plan plus the surface water and groundwater protection programs. You can also link to these sites off the Bureau of Drinking Water and Groundwater webpage at www.dnr.state.wi.us/org/water/dwg/index. Check these sites out and let me know what you think.

HAVE YOU GOT YOUR ASSESSMENT YET?

Since the last newsletter, WDNR staff have been busy completing the source water assessments for municipal systems and some assessments have already been hand delivered to the systems. Source water assessments for the 19 municipal systems which use surface water are done and have been distributed. In addition, the surface water assessments have been placed on the WDNR's source water assessment website for surface water systems at www.dnr.state.wi.us/org/water/dwg/swap/surface/index.htm.

For municipal systems that rely on groundwater, the WDNR has completed a number of assessments and has begun hand delivering them. Over 200 source water assessments have been delivered to municipal systems using groundwater so far. The WDNR plans to complete and deliver the remaining municipal groundwater system assessments by April 2004. Each assessment contains a map of the source water area with potential contaminant sources identified for each well plus a susceptibility determination for each well and the system as a whole.

The WDNR is also working on finalizing the assessments for the 10,000 plus other-than-municipal and noncommunity systems. The WDNR plans to finish these assessments by the end of 2004. A brief summary of each public water system's assessment will be placed on the Internet.

If you have questions about source water assessments, contact Jeff Helmuth, WDNR Source Water Assessment Program Coordinator, at (608) 266-5234 or jeffrey.helmuth@dnr.state.wi.us. You can also visit the WDNR source water assessment website at www.dnr.state.wi.us/org/water/dwg/swap/index.htm. Note that this is a new address.

WHAT'S THE NEXT STEP?

As noted above, the WDNR is hand delivering the source water assessments to each of the municipal water supply systems. This is being done for two reasons. First, each assessment contains maps showing well locations and source water areas, considered to be sensitive information. To make sure the assessment gets to the appropriate water utility staff, WDNR staff are hand delivering each municipal assessment. The second reason is that it gives the WDNR staff an opportunity to meet with each water utility, to explain the assessment and

recommendations and to encourage use of the assessment to take the next step – source water or wellhead protection - to protect its water supply source. Each assessment provides the basic information needed for a wellhead protection plan except for the management or protection steps. The WDNR considers source water protection for groundwater systems to be the same as wellhead protection.

For those municipal systems which don't have a wellhead protection plan, getting their assessment becomes a wonderful opportunity to use the information in the assessment to determine what step or steps are appropriate to protect their well or wells.

Each assessment contains a susceptibility determination for each well in the water supply system and the system as a whole. By reviewing the assessment, a community can determine what are the most significant threats, if any, to its wells. That information can be the basis for taking steps to minimize or eliminate those threats. In some cases, more information may be needed to evaluate possible options.

For municipal systems that already have a wellhead protection plan, this is a great chance to evaluate current protection efforts and determine whether additional actions are appropriate.

Source water or wellhead protection is not new. It is nothing more than working to protect contaminants from entering the water supply. Most water utilities are working toward this goal every day. The source water assessments contains valuable information to assist communities in this effort. It is hoped that source water or wellhead protection will be a cooperative effort between the water supplies, water users, WDNR and other agencies and organizations to make sure that safe drinking water is provided and water quality protected.

The source water assessment is also an excellent source of information that can be used in a community's comprehensive planning effort. The assessment information can be used along with other information to incorporate on wellhead protection as part of a comprehensive planning effort.



WHAT ACTIONS COULD OUR COMMUNITY TAKE?

Each community is different so each source water assessment will be different. For this reason, the WDNR is not going to specify a particular action or set of actions that each municipality should take to protect its wells. Each community will have to decide what actions are most appropriate to address the susceptibility of its wells.

Some options are presented here along with resources for more information on possible protection steps.

Possible nonregulatory options

- Conduct a public education program
- Install groundwater monitoring wells between a municipal well and potential contaminant sources
- Develop a groundwater contamination contingency plan
- Purchase property around a municipal well
- Conduct waste reduction programs
- Purchase property or development rights within the wellhead protection area
- Work with potential sources of contamination to minimize the contamination risk

Possible regulatory options

- Adopt zoning ordinances
- Adopt subdivision ordinances
- Establish design standards
- Establish operational standards
- Establish an inspection and testing program for potential contaminant sources
- Prohibit new contaminant sources
- Require site plan review

This is certainly not meant to be an all-inclusive list. Each community is encouraged to think creatively and identify solutions that address its unique situation.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES ON PROTECTION OPTIONS

Two WDNR publications, "A Template for Preparing Wellhead Protection Plans for Municipal Wells" and "State of Wisconsin Wellhead Protection Program Plan", contain information on possible management steps as part of a wellhead protection plan. Both are available in paper format from Dave Lindorff (see contact information on page 1) or on the internet at

www.dnr.state.wi.us/org/water/dwg/gw/wellhead.htm#publications.

The Wisconsin Geological and Natural History Survey has two documents that provide information on groundwater protection options. They are "A Guide to Groundwater Quality Planning and Management for Local Governments" (Survey Special Report 9, 1987) and "Groundwater Protection Through Local Land-Use Controls" (Survey Special Report 11, 1991). These are available from the Survey by calling 608-263-7389.

The USEPA sponsored a National Source Water Protection Conference in June that focused on going from the source water assessments to source water protection. Additional resources are being developed nationally to assist this effort. For more information and links to other sources of protection options, visit the conference website at www.epa.gov/ogwdw/protect/swpconf.html.

When you get your source water assessment, think about what actions might be appropriate for your community to protect its water supply. The final decisions are up to your community, but the WDNR is available to help as needed. Good luck in your protection efforts!

The Wisconsin Wellhead Protection Newsletter is a publication of the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources' Bureau of Drinking Water and Groundwater. Its purpose is to provide current information on wellhead protection topics. It is published in the spring and fall and as needed.

Comments, questions, suggestions and articles are welcome and can be sent to: David Lindorff, Editor, Wisconsin Wellhead Protection Newsletter, Department of Natural Resources, P. O. Box 7921, Madison, WI 53707-7921
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